

Version 1.0

# Nationwide Emergency Alert System Test Informational Toolkit



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Updated: August 15, 2011

# Introduction

- FEMA is working to provide EAS-relevant information for the Ready.gov Campaign and National Preparedness Month.
- EAS Test Information Updates will be available on the FEMA IPAWS Website:  
([http://www.fema.gov/emergency/ipaws/eas\\_info.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/emergency/ipaws/eas_info.shtm))
- This informational toolkit was informed by the lessons learned from the 2010 and 2011 Alaska EAS Test, the Virgin Islands 2011 Tsunami Live-Code EAS Demonstration, feedback from the [National Dialogue on the Emergency Alert System](#) website, and feedback from FEMA IPAWS webinars and virtual roundtables.
- The scope of this document involves:
  - Providing General EAS and Nationwide EAS Test Information
  - Recommending practical approaches for EAS public awareness campaigns
  - Creating a framework for State and local government customization
  - Continuous improvements and enhancements of the toolkit

**\*\*Although this toolkit provides specific information on the Nationwide EAS Test, communicating a broad-based understanding of State and local EAS is also recommended\*\***



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# National Emergency Alert System (EAS) Test Informational Toolkit: Table of Contents

1. [Benefits of Using the Toolkit](#)
2. [History of the EAS](#)
3. [Role of the EAS](#)
4. [Strategy Recommendations](#)
5. [Resource Examples](#)
6. [Key Messages and Talking Points](#)
7. [National EAS Test Notional FAQs](#)
8. [National EAS Test Notional Fact Sheet](#)
9. [National EAS Test Notional Press Release](#)

## Supplemental

1. [National EAS Test Notional Employee Memo](#)
2. [National EAS Test Notional Public Service Announcement](#)



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# Benefits of Using the Toolkit

- The benefits of communicating National, State, and Local EAS information to the communities you serve include:
  - Minimizing undue public concern or misunderstanding about the Test
  - Providing Test information within the context of existing State and local preparedness efforts
  - Reducing call volume to 911 call center staff
  - Limiting questions about the Nationwide EAS Test to State and local government officials
  - Supporting public awareness and education of emergency communication tools
  - Reinforcing preparedness campaign messaging and family/small business emergency planning kits
  - Assisting in communication strategies for State and Local EAS public education campaigns



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# History of the EAS

- The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is a public alert and warning system that leverages the communications assets of terrestrial broadcasters, cable television systems, wireless cable systems, satellite digital audio radio service (SDARS) providers, direct broadcast satellite (DBS) services and wireline video service providers to allow the President of the United States the capability to address the American public during a national emergency.
- This system must be available under all conditions. The system is also used by state and local authorities to deliver important emergency information, such as AMBER alerts.
- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Weather Service (NWS) regularly uses the system to disseminate emergency weather alerts and advisories.
- The Emergency Alert System (EAS) was created in 1994. It is the latest in a series of alert and warning systems that began with the Control of Electromagnetic Radiation (CONELRAD) program, established by President Harry Truman in 1951.



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# History of the EAS

- The CONELRAD was replaced in 1963 by the Emergency Broadcast System (EBS) which remained in place until 1994.
- The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) created the EAS in 1994 and began enforcing requirements that mandated all broadcast stations to have EAS equipment installed in 1997.
- By 2001, cable systems were required to have EAS equipment installed to override all program channels with a national-level EAS message, also known as an Emergency Action Notification (EAN).
- Several cable systems have been granted waivers from the EAS requirements.
- The Primary Entry Point (PEP) concept first surfaced in the mid-1980s. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) began funding PEP through the Broadcast Station Protection Program (BSPP)



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# History of the EAS

- Each PEP station transmitter site was provided with a shelter structure, an emergency power generator, fuel tank, basic programming equipment, and a dedicated Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) connection. A specially programmed EAS encoder/decoder (ENDEC) was added later for use with the national-level EAS.
- The Primary Entry Point Advisory Committee (PEPAC) was incorporated in the early 1990s to support and advise the FEMA on issues concerning the PEP System, and to assist the FEMA in managing the System.
- This FEMA-funded group is made up of a single representative from each PEP member station. The group later changed its name to the Primary Entry Point Administrative Council.
- In addition to the PEP System's primary role to broadcast and relay the President's message in a dire emergency, PEP stations are designed with a much higher-level of resiliency.
- These "hardened" radio stations provide the nation with last-resort mass communications capabilities under all conditions, as required by the President of the United States.



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# History of the EAS

- Broadcast radio receivers are ubiquitous. On average there are eight radio receiver sets for every U.S. household.
- These radio receivers can receive one or more of the approximately 14,355 full power radio stations broadcasting throughout the country. Over-the-air radio broadcasts are one-way, omni-directional transmissions.
- In the aftermath of a national catastrophic event, it is reasonable that authorities will transmit crucial information to the public through as many methods as possible.
- However, broadcast radio may be the most effective method since it is possible that terrestrial Internet Protocol (IP) networks and other pathways could be inoperable, especially at “last-mile” delivery to the public
- Prolonged power outages are expected in most catastrophic scenarios, negatively affecting IP networks and other communications, including cellular technologies.
- The national EAS program provides the nation with an unparalleled, survivable communications network available under most dire conditions.



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# Role of the EAS

- The “1995 Presidential Communications With the General Public During Periods of National Emergency, Statement of Requirements” document (1995 Presidential Statement of Requirements), signed by President Clinton, states:

“During periods of extreme national emergency, reliable communications are required to enable the President to reassure and give direction to the American people.”

- In 2006, Executive Order 13407 (E.O. 13407), signed by President Bush, established that it

“is the policy of the United States to have an effective, reliable, integrated, flexible, and comprehensive system to alert and warn the American people in situations of war, terrorist attack, natural disaster, or other hazards to public safety and well-being (public alert and warning system), taking appropriate account of the functions, capabilities, and needs of the private sector and of all levels of government in our Federal system, and to ensure that under all conditions the President can communicate with the American people.”



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# Role of the EAS

- As part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) larger efforts to strengthen our nation's preparedness and resiliency, FEMA and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced that we will conduct the first national-level test of the Emergency Alert System on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at 2:00 PM ET.
- Similar to the way local emergency alert system tests are conducted, the nationwide test will simultaneously involve television stations (including digital television, cable, satellite audio and television services) and broadcast radio stations across the U.S. and several U.S. territories (Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, American Samoa).
- The EAS has never been tested on a national level before, and conducting this test is an opportunity to baseline the system and its capabilities at all levels.
- The EAS test plays a key role in ensuring our nation is prepared for all hazards and that the public is able to receive critical and vital information, should it ever be needed.
- While EAS tests may be temporarily disruptive to radio and television programming, they are important to ensure that the EAS is functional.



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# Role of the EAS

- The November 9th date is near the end of hurricane season and before the severe winter weather season begins in earnest.
- The 2:00 PM ET broadcast time will minimize disruption during rush hours, while ensuring that the test occurs during working hours across several time zones in the United States.
- FEMA develops, operates and maintains the national-level EAS; conducts test and exercises; ensures the national-level EAS keeps pace with emerging technologies through the use of low-cost innovation techniques.
- The FCC maintains the regulatory responsibility, rules and enforcement of the EAS with EAS Participants
- NOAA's National Weather Service provides imminent weather threat warnings to the public.
- During the test, the NWS will provide situational awareness of possible severe weather and climate threats to the United States.



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# Role of the EAS

- If NOAA needs to activate the EAS for severe State/localized weather alerts, test managers may delay the test in that area to make way for the imminent threat weather alert.
- FEMA is working with the FCC and NOAA to communicate, educate, and inform EAS participants, emergency management agencies and organizations, and the public of the importance of the EAS, and the need to improve the system.

## FCC Rules

- Title 47, Chapter 1, Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.), Telecommunications, Federal Communications Commission, Emergency Alert System, Part 11, commonly referred to as “FCC Part 11” governs the EAS.
- Generally, all analog radio and television stations, wired and wireless cable television systems, Direct Broadcast Satellite (DBS), Digital Television (DTV), Satellite Digital Audio Radio Service (SDARS), digital cable and Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB), and wireline video systems operators are required under the FCC's rules to comply with EAS rules



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# Role of the EAS

- These providers operate in an organized manner within the EAS to broadcast emergency alerts and crucial information to the public.
- Service providers, opting to not participate in the EAS must receive an authorization letter from the FCC and cease transmissions or programming on all channels during a national-level EAS message.
- These Non-participating National (NN) sources “are required to broadcast the EAS codes, Attention Signal, the sign-off announcement in the EAS Operating Handbook, and then stop operating.”



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# Role of the EAS

## EAS Relay Network

- National Primary (NP) stations, commonly known as PEP stations, comprise the PEP System and receive the messages delivered by FEMA.
- NP stations are responsible for broadcasting the Presidential alert to the public and the State primary stations within range.
- Presidential messages as part of an EAN are unlimited in time. All other messages are limited to two minutes.
- Local Primary (LP) radio stations act as key EAS monitoring sources for other stations. Each LP station must monitor other EAS message sources according to the individual state EAS plan.
- State Primary (SP) stations are the entry point for State messages, which can originate from the Governor or a designated representative.
- State Relay (SR) stations are designated relay points for state and national EAS messages as set forth in each individual state EAS plan.



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# Strategy Recommendations

- Embed National EAS Test information within the context of State and local EAS public education efforts and preparedness campaigns
  - Provide emergency communications information on websites, newsletters, and/or any available social media
  - Incorporate EAS key messages into family and small business checklists and kits
  - Incorporate specific information and instructions for tuning commercial radios/portable television to receive EAS messages
  - Highlight general EAS and National EAS Test information in National Preparedness Month State-wide and Local Campaigns
  - Engage non-profit partners to incorporate general EAS and National EAS Test information into preparedness campaigns



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# Strategy Recommendations

- Communicate Test information with your Regional, State, and Local Emergency Communications Committees, EAS Participant Organizations, and State and local government agencies
  - Partner EAS Participant organizations, academic institutions, and other State and local agencies in public awareness campaigns to create audio and/or visual public service announcements
  - Enroll as a Coalition Member for National Preparedness Month (<http://community.fema.gov/connect.ti/READYNPM>) to share and receive information on the Nationwide EAS Test
  - Send notifications through government employee emails and newsletters to:
    - 911 call centers
    - Public Safety and Homeland Security Departments
    - Transit and Tourism divisions
    - Public Health Sectors
    - Small Business Associations
    - Academic Institutions
    - Tribal Liaison Offices
    - Emergency Management Agencies



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# Strategy Recommendations

- Coordinate tests and exercises with your Regional, State, and Local Emergency Communications Committees, EAS Participant Organizations, and State and local government agencies
  - Coordinate State/Local EAS testing with EAS Participant Organizations, RECCs/SECCs/LECCs as part of Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) exercises to promote further understanding of EAS
  - Conduct test reception public surveys after Required Monthly Tests (RMT) to identify mitigation areas that will improve the EAS in your area
  - Engage and communicate EAS improvement activities with the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA), International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM), and other national emergency management organizations to promote broad-based awareness and education of the EAS



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# Resource Examples

- Some examples of State and Local EAS information incorporated into preparedness campaigns:
  - Washington State Military Department InFocus Campaign:  
[http://www.emd.wa.gov/preparedness/prep\\_infocus.shtml#Hypo](http://www.emd.wa.gov/preparedness/prep_infocus.shtml#Hypo)
  - Washington State Military Department EAS Information Page:  
[http://www.emd.wa.gov/telcom/telcom\\_emergency\\_alerting\\_systems.shtml](http://www.emd.wa.gov/telcom/telcom_emergency_alerting_systems.shtml)
  - Ready Illinois Campaign:  
<http://www.ready.illinois.gov/before/>
  - Missouri Emergency Management Agency Ready in 3 Campaign:  
[http://sema.dps.mo.gov/plan\\_and\\_prepare/](http://sema.dps.mo.gov/plan_and_prepare/)
  - Alaska DHS&EM and Alaska Broadcasters Association: Chill It's Just a Drill Campaign:  
<http://www.dps.state.ak.us/PIO/docs/Press/2010/EAN010410.pdf>

Have a strategy recommendation to contribute? Go to [A National Dialogue on the Emergency Alert System](https://nationaldialogue-emergencyalertsystem.ideascale.com/a/dtd/32776-13870) (<https://nationaldialogue-emergencyalertsystem.ideascale.com/a/dtd/32776-13870>)



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# Key Messages

- 1) The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) will conduct the first nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) on Wednesday, November 9 at 2:00 p.m. (Eastern) and may last up to three and a half minutes.
- 2) On November 9, the public will hear a message indicating that "This is a test." The audio message will be the same for both radio and television.
- 3) A Nationwide EAS Test will help the federal partners and EAS participants determine the reliability of the system and its effectiveness in notifying the public of emergencies and potential dangers nationally and regionally.
- 4) As the Federal, State, tribal, territorial and local governments prepare for and test their capabilities, this event serves as a reminder that everyone should establish an [emergency preparedness kit](#) and [emergency plan](#) for themselves, their families, communities, and businesses.
- 5) Anyone can visit [www.Ready.gov](http://www.Ready.gov) for more information about how to prepare for and stay informed about what to do in the event of an actual emergency.



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# Talking Points

- FEMA, in coordination with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), will conduct the first nationwide Emergency Alert System (EAS) Test on November 9, at 2:00 p.m. Eastern.
- The National-level EAS is a national public alert and warning system that enables the President of the United States to address the American public during extreme emergencies.
- State and local officials can leverage the EAS to send alerts and warnings to broadcast radio and television stations, cable television, satellite radio and television services and wireline providers
- FEMA, the FCC, and NOAA's vision for improving the EAS is incremental, which means testing the readiness and effectiveness of the EAS as it currently exists today is the first step.
- A more effective and functional EAS requires continual testing to identify necessary improvements so that all levels of the system can better serve our communities and deliver critical information that will save lives and protect property.
- EAS Participants provide a critical public service to the nation as the resilient backbone of alert and warning when all other means of communication are unavailable.
- EAS Participants include all broadcasters, satellite and digital radio and television, cable television and wireline video providers who ensure the system is at a constant state of readiness.
- FEMA, in coordination with the FCC, is continually engaging the EAS Community through multiple activities, including information updates, workshops, roundtables, webinars, and on-site State and local EAS demonstrations to continue a solutions-oriented dialogue.



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## **Frequently Asked Questions: Nationwide Emergency Alert System Test**

### **What is the Emergency Alert System (EAS)?**

The National-level EAS is a national public alert and warning system that enables the President of the United States to address the American public during extreme emergencies. Alerting authorities can leverage the State and local EAS to send alerts and warnings to radio and television stations, cable television, satellite radio and television services and wireline providers.

### **What is Nationwide Emergency Alert System (EAS) Test ?**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA,) in coordination with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), will send an EAS test message to all participating radio, television, cable, and satellite providers.

### **What Can I Expect to Hear/See?**

The Test may look like regular, local EAS tests that most people are already familiar with, but there will be some differences in what viewers will see and hear. The audio message will repeat "This is a test." The video message scroll may not indicate "This is a test." The message will last for approximately three minutes and then regular programming will resume.

### **Where Will I Hear/See the Test?**

On all participating radio, television, cable, and satellite providers (who are called EAS Participants).

### **When Will the Test Occur?**

November 9, 2011 at 2:00 PM (Eastern). The 2:00 PM (Eastern) time was selected to make sure the Test can occur during normal business hours across many time zones.

**[http://www.fema.gov/emergency/ipaws/eas\\_info.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/emergency/ipaws/eas_info.shtm)**

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## **Fact Sheet:** **Nationwide Emergency Alert System Test**

FEMA, in coordination with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), will conduct the first nationwide Emergency Alert System (EAS) Test on November 9, at 2:00 p.m. Eastern.

The purpose of the Test is to assess the readiness and effectiveness of the EAS and identify incremental improvements to better serve our communities in the preservation of life and property. Although the EAS is frequently used by State and local governments to send weather alerts and other emergencies, there has never been a national activation of the system.

FEMA, the FCC, and NOAA's vision for improving the EAS is incremental, which means testing the readiness and effectiveness of the EAS as it currently exists today is the first step. For this reason, the Test is not a pass or fail measure.

The Test may look like regular, local EAS tests that most people are already familiar with, but there will be some differences in what viewers will see and hear. The audio message will repeat "This is a test." The video message scroll may not indicate "This is a test." The message will last for approximately three minutes and then regular programming will resume.

Future testing of the EAS will assess the effectiveness and reliability of other technologies to achieve the ultimate goal of timely alert and warning to American public in the preservation of life and property.

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# FEMA

## **Press Release:**

# **A Nationwide Emergency Alert System Test Will Take Place On November 9, 2011**

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) will conduct the first nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System (EAS).

The nationwide test will occur on Wednesday, November 9 at 2 p.m. (Eastern) time and may last up to three and a half minutes. The public will hear a message indicating that "This is a test." The audio message will be the same for both radio, television, and cable.

The National-level EAS is a public alert and warning system that enables the President of the United States to address the American public during extreme emergencies. Similar to local EAS tests that are conducted frequently, the Nationwide Test will involve broadcast radio and television stations, cable television, satellite radio and television services and wireline providers across all states and territories.

Over the past two years and as part of ongoing national preparedness planning efforts, FEMA, the FCC and other Federal partners, State, local, tribal and territorial governments, EAS Participants, and others in the EAS Community have been working toward making this test a reality.

As the Federal, State, tribal, territorial and local governments prepare for and test their capabilities, this event serves as a reminder that everyone should establish an [emergency preparedness kit](#) and [emergency plan](#) for themselves, their families, communities, and businesses. Anyone can visit [www.Ready.gov](http://www.Ready.gov) for more information about how to prepare for and stay informed about what to do in the event of an actual emergency.

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**[http://www.fema.gov/emergency/ipaws/eas\\_info.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/emergency/ipaws/eas_info.shtm)**

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## **Employee Memo: Testing of the National Emergency Alert System November 9, 2011**

The readiness and effectiveness of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) is paramount for ensuring the Regional, State, local, territorial, and tribal communities we serve receive timely alerts and warnings before, during, and after an emergency.

Recently you may have heard FEMA Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS), in close coordination with Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), will be conducting the first-ever nationwide Test of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) on Wednesday, November 9, 2011 at 2:00 PM (Eastern).

The National-level EAS is a public alert and warning system that enables the President of the United States to address the American public during extreme emergencies. Similar to local EAS tests that are conducted frequently, the Nationwide EAS Test will involve broadcast radio and television stations, cable television, satellite radio and television services and wireline providers across all states and territories.

We ask that you inform your employees, departments, and other communities of interest of the upcoming Test date and provide them with information to ensure that we can prevent any public concern or misunderstanding. This event also serves as a reminder that everyone should establish an [emergency preparedness kit](#) and [emergency plan](#) for themselves, their families, communities, and businesses..

More information can be found on the FEMA IPAWS website ([http://www.fema.gov/emergency/ipaws/eas\\_info.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/emergency/ipaws/eas_info.shtm)).

**[http://www.fema.gov/emergency/ipaws/eas\\_info.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/emergency/ipaws/eas_info.shtm)**

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## **Public Service Announcement: 45 Second Audio Script**

Prepare. Plan. Stay Informed.

On November 9th at approximately 2:00 PM Eastern, the State/County/Commonwealth of \_\_\_\_\_ will participate in a nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System.

It will be heard on the radio and seen on local, cable, and satellite TV.

This test will last for approximately three minutes and return listeners and viewers back to regularly scheduled programming.

The National EAS is a public alert and warning system that enables the President of the United States to address the American public during extreme emergencies.

As the Federal, State, tribal, territorial and local governments prepare for and test their capabilities, this event serves as a reminder that everyone should establish an emergency preparedness kit and emergency plan for themselves, their families, communities, and businesses.

Visit \_\_\_\_\_ or **FEMA dot gov slash emergency slash ipaws** for more information.

**[http://www.fema.gov/emergency/ipaws/eas\\_info.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/emergency/ipaws/eas_info.shtm)**

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